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CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS WITH POWER

A SERMON
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AS WE read the Gospels we find somebody saying, "Behold the Class," and Jesus saying, "Behold the Man." Do you know about Matthew? He belongs to the class, tax-collector, and you know what they are. Jesus always said that he would see Matthew himself for he might be a good man for the Kingdom. On his own merits, declassified, he proved a good man. That man is a Samaritan. Is not that enough? But the man on the Jericho Road who "took care of him," and the only leper who returned to give thanks, were Samaritans. However disreputable and ungrateful they are as a whole, these are good men. This woman is a street woman and you know what they are, and this man is a publican and that tells all that one needs to know about him. But Jesus said, "Stand out apart from all names and groups and, before men and God, what are you?" Many of the surprises are just this, Jesus looking into a good crowd and picking out a bad man and looking into a bad crowd and picking out a good man, saying to the one, "Thou art the man," and to the other, "Thou art not far from the Kingdom."

Jesus declassified men in a class-ridden world and rated them one by one. Christianity opened a private account with God and men for John Doe, individual. The world refused to deal with a man on his own merits. It had to know his class name before it could estimate him; know how to treat him or how much life to allow him. As soon as he said,

"I am John Doe, free or bound, home born or foreign born, Jew or Roman, knight, baron, lord, gentleman or peasant," then, he was rated. If he belonged to the class, gentlemen, he was so dealt with and life opened to him as for gentlemen. It made no difference that he never felt as a gentleman feels or acted as a gentleman acts.

Wherever the Gospels have been read this idea of taking men one by one has been kept alive. Much of the world's practice has been the other way but the principle has lived. A few of the first comers to this country wrote the class name for identification. The first college and some of the churches here rated people by the group to which they belonged. Class names never counted for very much in America. Life here was such that every one had to count for one to keep the whole group from being blotted out. The tradition was established that a man gets his rating on the basis of his contribution to the business of helping the group bear the common burdens and defend against the common dangers. There was no place or room for any other kind of man. Life in America never said to anyone, "Just this much of life is allowed you and just this responsibility is put upon you, both according to your group rating." Life here has always said, "Here is all of life for you and all that you have in you is expected of you." True, they worked as hard as peasants but they did not have the peasant's class feeling. They had division of labor but no class barriers. Men of their own kind, with whom they had dug and chopped, har-

vested and husked, became their teachers, lawyers ministers and representatives in government, but they established no class. All the ways to all the places were left open to every one.

Is this a true principle, taking men one by one, letting each take all of life that he can dip up with his sized cup? When men were allowed only the little field marked off for their kind, did the world bury alive many of its best men? Take the conspicuous names of America; go through the States and see the men who are enriching the world in many fields. Most of these men have come from the groups for which life simply would not open in a class-bound world. They would have lived and died in the little field marked off for their group. Lincoln would have been a manual laborer to the end. For some conspicuous service he might have become a knight or been made a cardinal or pope. These were about the only ways out of the group to which he belonged.

How deep seated and persistent are these old group divisions. The story for a hundred centuries back is just this contest of class conscious groups for territory and national life. People stood together who had the same ancestry, color, speech or religion. They were conscious of their group and tried to make it supreme in power. People meant nothing to them as people. They must be their own people. The code recognized other people only to get them out of the way. National lines were established and we had the English people conscious of English people, standing for England against the world. So we had

Spanish, Dutch, French, German, Russian and all the rest, each conscious of its own group and seeking power and place against all the others. This process is not yet complete. Now that the opportunity is offered, numerous groups arise which have been suppressed, seeking national life for those of the same traditions and language.

The national groups, each conscious of its own and seeking power, make a part of the human struggle. There is another line of division. Not only have the English had their differences with Spanish, Dutch, French and German people, but also groups of Englishmen have sought power against all other English groups. We read of the baron class, the land owning, noble, guild, merchant, artisan and peasant classes. Within England herself each of these has had class consciousness and sought power to make its own kind supreme in England. All these groups within the Empire have forgotten their differences only at such times as all groups of English people had to stand for their kind against Spanish, French or German kind.

We have a new phase of the long class struggle which has made the foreign and the domestic wars. We are familiar with the struggle of the class conscious English against all who are not English; we are equally familiar with classes of Englishmen against other groups of Englishmen. The new class struggle is not concerned with either of these. It is not concerned with all English people or all of any nation against the world. It is not concerned with

the rival groups within any nation. It says that English, Spanish, French, German and American are not real divisions; that no one should try to be conscious of all under either of these names and that he could not be conscious of all of them if he would. It says that the differences among English people themselves are so great that no one can be conscious of the whole group, and so of the French and the American. It says that nothing is gained by standing up for, and trying to feel, any one of these groups against any or all other national groups. The new form of class struggle asks, "What do you get out of being an Englishman, Frenchman, or American? Have these divisions not blinded you to the real divisions?"

The new class struggle takes us back to the world with no national lines and says to all groups within each nation, "Forget your differences as Englishmen, as Frenchmen, as Americans. Say first that you are neither one of these and that they do not concern you. Be conscious of your own kind everywhere against all who are not of your kind." The kind means those who do a certain kind of work. In the language of the new order all these in the world who do this kind of work are to acquire class feeling. All of this class are to organize and look out for themselves against all other people in the world. It states frankly that there is to be no co-operation of classes; that they enter into no agreements with other people. "It all resolves itself into a matter of cold, unsentimental power. All the institutions, what is called law, order, religion, all these things made by the

classes who have had control, we do not recognize. New conceptions of right and wrong must generate and permeate the workers. We must look on conduct and actions that advance the social and economic interest of the working class as right, ethically, legally, religiously, socially and by every other measurement. That conduct which helps to maintain and gives comfort to the other class we must consider wrong by every standard." This new class, the proletariat, must be conscious only of its own; get all the power and have the world absolutely for its own. There will be just this one group.

Everyone should know just what is going on. This is the most widely spread doctrine of our time, yet it comes to thousands as a matter of surprise when brought to light by a government agent or a Congressional investigation. We, as a people, by our representatives, have been dealing for months, on low ground, with a policy of national isolation, considering the differences and interests of Americans as such. This today is a third-rate question. Our international relations, which our national body has scarcely reached, these are now second-rate matters. The question of the hour is not whether we can have America for Americans or whether this group of nations can stand against another group. The first-rate matter of our time is a class movement which is not concerned with the internal or external relations of any nation and would clear the ground of all such lines and distinctions. While we have been debating the second and third-rate questions on low grounds

the matter of first-rate importance has assumed large proportions.

There are two distinct movements going on and it is easy to smudge the line between them. It is easy today for one to make himself believe that he is helping a great onward movement for justice and right when he may be throwing his weight with evils which have cursed the world from the beginning of time.

There is a movement for the betterment of all sorts and conditions of men; for more general participation of all in the world; for more uniform conditions of life; for eliminating the obstructions that have kept the machinery of government from recording the popular will. This is a commendable effort toward making opportunity open generously to men of different capabilities, so that the declaration in the book may be true in fact. This movement says that no one should think of any group less than the whole group; it says that one may be a good Southerner, or Californian, or citizen of Massachusetts and fall short as a class conscious citizen. This effort for a better day is the spirit of our time and has the support of all forward looking people who hold the steps already trod and try to take another.

Then there is another movement which should never be confounded with this effort in the interest of all sorts and conditions of men. This other social program is a class movement with no concern for the general welfare. We dislike this program and we must be against it, just as we dislike all the other class conscious groups, religious, political and finan-

cial, which have tried to take the world and dictate the terms of life to all others. Just at this time, when we are especially sensitive to contracts being called scraps of paper, we do not take kindly to a group in the world saying that they respect agreements with their own kind only. We pride ourselves that we have reached the status of contract. Just at this time we are very much on guard against right being determined by the size of the club and we cannot look with favor on a group that says it is all a matter of cold, unsentimental power. Just now we are too painfully conscious of the effect of getting a place in the sun, by putting another group out, to look with indifference on any group which says place and power for us alone. Here is a group which revives all the ethics, all the moral standards of all the worst class conscious groups of all the past. All the worst of capitalism and Prussianism is here taken over bodily. All which had to be fought before liberty could come and democracy be even a name, is here set up, the same old tyrant with a new group to share the favors. This small group is against the large group which makes up the stable population of all civilized nations. It makes its own test of Who's Who. At a low point it draws a line. All below are workers to be counted in. All above are not and are counted out. Nothing that is human pertains to them.

Here is a class conscious group which is thorough going. No group has gone so far. With groups of the past there has been at least a theory that other

groups might be of some use and allowed to have some place in the world. The worst tyrannies have had at least a theory that all that men had labored for and collected, merited some consideration. In the new class conscious group, seeking power, even the theory of other rights is wanting.

It is a matter of common knowledge now that there have been group efforts to get rid of this kind of nation. One has been removed. Here is another concerted effort with just the same end. Democracy happens to be the home of a large group of people who have improved their conditions through great labor. This new class movement feels greatest enmity toward this special group which constitutes most of the people in this nation. Democracy is just as much in the way of a proletariat order as a Prussian order. This new class group is just as much against America as Prussia was. Both require the removal of the theory that the world is for all groups and kinds, each according to its ability.

Through a united effort which recognized no party lines, only for or against, with no neutral ground between, the first effort against this kind of nation failed. Now it is for the second enemy to be seen as clearly, though masked in a theory of reform as the first was in a theory of culture. Both are old faces and their ends the same, power for a part of the people. Though we transfer the vices of a cultivated top of society to a less cultivated group at the bottom the principle remains the same and the tyranny is only increased. Between a class conscious, culti-

vated tyranny at the top and a class conscious, vulgar tyranny at the bottom, men would wisely choose the first.

The imperative matter now is that we make our consciousness include the whole class, American, and all in the world who believe in the same things. With the second enemy against government by all, for all, within our own gates, and going up and down the whole earth with banner and torch, we cannot demobilize into party, sectional and national groups. This would be fatal.

Whenever any group, less than the whole people, says "Solidarity, now all stand together and take the world for a part of us," all others, who do not believe this, cannot make too great haste in saying, "Solidarity, now stand together and keep the world for all of us of every class and name."